

Psalms 14:3

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy:
there is none that doeth good, no, not one.

Analysis

They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy: there is none that doeth good, no, not one. This verse answers the question posed in verse 2—God's searching examination finds universal corruption. The threefold emphasis ("all gone aside," "all together become filthy," "none that doeth good") leaves no exceptions, no loopholes, no grounds for self-righteousness. The diagnosis is comprehensive: total human depravity apart from divine grace.

"They are all gone aside" (hakol sar, הָכֹל סָר) means turned aside, departed from the right way. Sur indicates deviation, apostasy, turning away from the path. This echoes Exodus 32:8 (the golden calf): "They have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them." The verb suggests deliberate turning, not accidental wandering. Humanity hasn't merely drifted from God but actively turned away.

"Together" (yachdav, יַחַד) emphasizes corporate unity in corruption. This isn't isolated individuals but collective human rebellion. All together, humanity has turned from God. This corporate dimension recalls Genesis 11 (Babel) where humanity united in rebellion, saying "let us build us a city and a tower" without reference to God.

"Become filthy" (neelach, נִלְאָח) is vivid language. Alach means to become corrupt, spoiled, turned sour—used of milk that has gone bad or meat that has rotted. The Niphal form indicates they have made themselves putrid, have allowed themselves

to become corrupted. This is moral putrescence—what was intended for good purpose has turned rotten, producing stench rather than nourishment.

"There is none that doeth good" (ein oseh-tov, אין עשה־טוב) repeats the indictment from verse 1, but now as result of divine examination rather than initial diagnosis. God has searched and confirmed: no one does good. The comprehensive "none" allows no exceptions based on relative morality, religious observance, or cultural sophistication.

"No, not one" (ein gam-echad, אין גם־אחד) adds emphatic clarification, as if anticipating objection: "Surely someone..." No. Not even one. Gam intensifies: "not even," "not so much as." Echad means one, a single person. The repetition drives home the point: universal human corruption without exception apart from divine grace.

Historical Context

Paul quotes this verse (along with verses 1-3 and following verses) in Romans 3:10-12 as part of his comprehensive demonstration that "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). Paul's argument in Romans 1-3 systematically eliminates all grounds for human boasting: pagans are guilty (Romans 1:18-32), moralists are guilty (Romans 2:1-16), Jews are guilty despite possessing the law (Romans 2:17-29). Romans 3:9 concludes: "we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin." Then Paul marshals Old Testament testimony, including Psalm 14:1-3, to establish biblical warrant for universal human sinfulness.

The doctrine of total depravity doesn't mean humans are as bad as they could possibly be or incapable of acts of relative goodness. Rather, it means:

1. Sin has affected every aspect of human nature (mind, will, affections, body)
2. Nothing we do is untainted by sin—even our good works are mixed with impure motives
3. We are unable to save ourselves or merit God's favor through moral achievement

4. Left to ourselves, none would seek God or choose righteousness (requiring God's prevenient grace to initiate salvation).

This doctrine demolishes human pride and self-righteousness.

The Pharisee in Jesus's parable boasted: "God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican" (Luke 18:11). But Jesus commended the publican who prayed: "God be merciful to me a sinner" (Luke 18:13). Only those who acknowledge their corruption can receive grace. Self-righteousness blinds to need for Savior.

Isaiah 64:6 provides parallel diagnosis: "But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags." Even our best works, offered to holy God, are contaminated by sin. This establishes that salvation must be by grace through faith, not by works (Ephesians 2:8-9). If even one person could achieve righteousness through moral effort, Christ died unnecessarily (Galatians 2:21).

Yet Scripture also affirms that believers, though still sinners, are being transformed by grace. Regeneration produces new nature (2 Corinthians 5:17), enabling genuine obedience that pleases God—not earning salvation but flowing from it (Ephesians 2:10). The gospel announces: though "none doeth good," God through Christ makes us righteous, then progressively sanctifies us, ultimately perfecting us at resurrection.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. How does the threefold emphasis ('all gone aside,' 'all together become filthy,' 'none that doeth good') eliminate grounds for human self-righteousness?
2. What is the difference between saying humans are 'totally depraved' and saying humans are 'as bad as they could possibly be'?
3. How does the doctrine of universal human sinfulness establish the necessity of salvation by grace through faith rather than by works?
4. Why is self-righteousness (comparing ourselves favorably to others) so spiritually dangerous, and how does this verse confront it?
5. How can believers hold together two truths: (1) apart from grace, we do no good; (2) through grace, we can do works that please God?

Interlinear Text

הֵכֵל	קָרָה	יַחְדָּו	נֶאֱלָחוּ	אֵין
H3605	They are all gone aside	they are all together	become filthy	H369
	H5493	H3162	H444	
עֲשֵׂה	טוֹב	אֵין	גַּם	אֶחָד:
there is none that doeth	good	H369	H1571	no not one
H6213	H2896			H259

Additional Cross-References

Isaiah 53:6 (Parallel theme): All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.

Isaiah 64:6 (Parallel theme): But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.

Romans 3:23 (Parallel theme): For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;

Psalms 14:1 (Good): The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good.

Job 14:4 (Parallel theme): Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one.

Psalms 58:3 (Parallel theme): The wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies.

Psalms 143:2 (Parallel theme): And enter not into judgment with thy servant: for in thy sight shall no man living be justified.

Ephesians 2:3 (Parallel theme): Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.

Ezekiel 36:25 (Parallel theme): Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you.

Jeremiah 2:13 (Parallel theme): For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water.